

# **CAPTURING THE HUMAN HIGH GROUND: ARMY ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP DURING AN ERA OF PERSISTENT CONFLICT**

BY

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DURING AN ERA OF PERSISTENT CONFLICT**

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## ABSTRACT

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The ability of military leaders to adapt to complex sociocultural situations in wartime is widely recognized at every level of defense leadership as a significant factor of success during this era of persistent conflict. The will of the people is now the objective of both GENs Petraeus and McChrystal's strategy. Yet, it is one thing to dictate requirements about developing host nation relationships and gaining the will of the people, and another to develop American leaders adaptive enough to carry out these directives. Success is now determined by how well we "*Capture the Human High Ground*". Army leaders must have a mindset based on agility of thought and adaptability of action. This study presents a framework for adaptability competences in Army leaders through a series of arguments culminating with a suggested "Way Ahead" to meet the current requirements. Arguments will support that the Army does not have the programs in place to develop agile and adaptive leaders needed for this era of persistent conflict, and in so doing, provides a significant strategic shortcoming in winning the asymmetric fight. The Army currently has the knowledge and capability to provide adequate education and training in adaptability to all deploying forces yet courses are not adequately established. This

study recommends a bridging strategy be implemented during pre-deployment to meet the needs of the war fighter, while continued research occurs to ensure that adaptive leadership becomes part of a life-long professional learning process for the Army leader.



## CAPTURING THE HUMAN HIGH GROUND: ARMY ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP DURING AN ERA OF PERSISTENT CONFLICT

Military leaders at every level of the Department of Defense recognize that the ability to adapt to complex sociocultural situations is a significant factor of success during this era of persistent conflict.<sup>1</sup> Full-spectrum military operations involving contemporary counterinsurgency and counter-terrorism must include non-kinetic, human-centered victory. Military leaders need to capture the human high ground to ensure strategic victory and not just victory on the battlefield.<sup>2</sup> General Stanley McCrystal Commander's Initial Assessment, dated 30 August 2009, replicates GEN Petraeus' guidance in Iraq which centers on the population. The will of the people is now the objective of the strategy.<sup>3</sup> It is one thing to dictate requirements to gain the support and will of the people, and another to develop American leaders adaptive enough to carry out such directives. Currently, Army leaders are not trained in the non-kinetic skills of adaptability prior to deploying to population-centered conflicts. If strong leaders lack adaptive, non-kinetic skills then sound counterinsurgency strategy will fail!

Adaptability has long been considered a core competency for military leadership, yet there is still debate how adaptability can be developed through training and education. The Army has studied adaptability since 2002 and requires a few more years of research and study prior to implementing a permanent cradle to grave training policy. Regrettably, the United States does not have the luxury of time to wait for the Army's adaptability research to conclude. The nation requires leaders who are agile in thought and adaptive in action to deploy into population-centered conflicts.

Why is the Army not where it needs to be with adaptability training? First, multiple programs concentrate on different adaptability dimensions, yet no one program incorporates all

dimensions of an adaptive performance model.<sup>4</sup> For an Army leader to be fully capable of adapting in the current asymmetric environment all skills need to be present.<sup>5</sup> Second, no requirements exist for Army leaders to be trained in non-kinetic skills of adaptive leadership. Neither U.S Army Forces Command, nor First Army requires training in adaptive leadership or non-kinetic skills prior to deployment into either Iraq or Afghanistan.

Through proper training and education, agile Army leaders can shift from tactical operations on the kinetic battlefield and adapt to non-kinetic human terrain actions. The Army has adequate knowledge and capability to provide proficiency training to deploying leaders, never the less, courses have not been established. A single adaptability knowledge point should be established to integrate and synchronize all adaptability dimensions into a non-kinetic war fight construct to meet the needs of the first problem. To fill the requirements of the second problem, a bridging strategy can be established to enhance deploying adaptive leadership. This will provide time for the Department of Defense and the Army to validate a leader adaptive performance model for future integration into a professional development cycle.

### **The Changing National Security Environment**

Two decades of elevated security and conflict have proven a significant learning experience for our nation and the United States Army. Army leaders have been tested at home and abroad, and the face of America's national security has changed forever. The changing operational environment drove the largest transformation in the Army's history, and this transformation continues today in the education and training of Army leaders.

Military operations have transitioned from third generation warfare (3GW) into fourth generation warfare (4GW) where there are less state-on-state wars and a return to conflicts between differing cultures, religions, and ideologies.<sup>6</sup> Don Vandergriff, a leading expert in

Army leader adaptability training and author of *Raising the Bar* (2006), writes “4GW is non-state warfare, where organizations with no loyalty to a centralized power can and do wage wars with the state and other non-state organizations” (p. 16). Colonel Thomas Hammes in *The Sling and the Stones* (2004) suggests that the United States lost 4GW wars in Vietnam, Lebanon, and Somalia; France suffered defeats in Vietnam and Algeria; and the USSR in Afghanistan to lesser and far weaker foes because of unconventional strategies and tactics.<sup>7</sup> Special note is that 4GW is the only type of war that the country has lost. Characteristics of 4GW include asymmetry of opponents’ technology and resources; the blurring of strategic, operational and tactical levels of war; decentralized operations; non-linear operations; shift to human centered gravity; and a war of winning the hearts and minds through a narrative.<sup>8</sup> The truisms of 4GW and asymmetric warfare play into realities for the United States today in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Philippines, and the Horn of Africa.

To ensure the cultural and cognitive dominance on the battlefield we must understand the fundamental truth of war is inherently human according to MG (Ret) Scales in his Statement for the Record to the Senate Armed Services Committee (2007). “Success in battle will be defined as much in terms of capturing the human and cultural rather than the geographical high ground...and think so as to anticipate rather than react to the enemy’s action”.<sup>9</sup> When a world power intervenes into the affairs of a lesser state or non-state the conflict will inherently become asymmetric. Lesser state or non-state actors may neutralize a world power’s capabilities with vastly less sophisticated capabilities. The weaker actor will indirectly engage with actions like improvised explosive devises (IED), attacks on lines of communication and supply, and ambushes, and avoiding decisive engagement. More so, the weaker actor will utilize non-military means to control the fight and gain support of the population. By utilizing messages

associated with religious, cultural, and social identities lesser actors develop narratives to sway the population against the larger and more dominant force.

In both Iraq and Afghanistan, the U. S. and coalition forces have won the kinetic combat fight only to struggle with the non-kinetic battle for the population. Numerous reports have acknowledged this. Newsweek's (2009) Sami Yousafzai and Ron Moreau talk of the pitfalls and mistakes made by the United States and coalition forces in Afghanistan. In the article, Yousafzai and Moreau speak to Mullah Aga Mohammed. Mohammed is a 45-year-old insurgent recruiter and member of the Taliban's governing Council in Zabul Province, Afghanistan. The Mullah stated:

American operations that harassed villagers, bombings that killed civilians, and Karzai's corrupt police and officials were alienating villagers in turning them in our favor. Soon we did not have to hide so much on our raids. We came openly. When they saw us, villagers started preparing green tea and food for us. The tables were turned, Karzai's police and officials mostly hid in their district compounds like prisoners.<sup>10</sup>

This statement illustrates how the U. S. and coalition forces are struggling with the non-kinetic fight by not understanding the power of perception among the local populace. The Army is concerned about the Taliban's recent success in persuading thousands of young Afghans to shift their support to fighting the foreign occupation. President Obama has concurred with an increase in American's military presence to counter the momentum of the Taliban. A force surge, however, will only have a lasting impact if accompanied by a direct effort in reassuring and supporting the Afghan civilians, to include a committed effort to persuade large groups of Taliban fighters to put down their arms and give up the fight. Non-kinetic means is the only way

to accomplished this. Soldiers and leaders must shift their focus, in part, from the enemy and focus on the civilian.

The United States is capable of controlling the geography, disrupting the enemy's phasing and timing, and to a lesser extent hindering its external support but, the U. S. has had difficulty winning the war of ideology, and thereby winning the support of the civilians; and ensuring their allegiance to a central government. Asymmetric forces utilize six dynamics in employing and growing an insurgency. These consist of leadership, objectives, environment and geography, external support and sanctuary, phasing and timing, and ideology and narrative.<sup>11</sup>

Asymmetric forces that are political or identity-focused insurgencies use ideology to spearhead their movement.<sup>12</sup> Their growth relies heavily on unstable conditions. In the case of Al Qaeda, its ideology is to summon a jihad against non-believing countries to develop an Islamic world. The movement's purpose is to destroy the local legitimacy of governments and world powers as seen in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan among others. In asymmetric warfare, an enemy's well devised and thought out narrative can be an effective weapon in turning popular support to the weaker force. To counter this asymmetric threat the United States Army needs leaders that have the non-kinetic skills necessary to win the hearts and minds, amplify the narrative, and reduce the host nation negative perceptions of Americans.

### **Decisive Point in Capturing the Human High Ground: Relationship Building**

The overriding lesson of the United States experience in Iraq and Afghanistan is that no occupying power can hope to squash an insurgency by killing and capturing its way to victory rather, it must align with the local populace, protect them, and provide for their basic needs. This is the required mindset shift to win the asymmetric battle.

“The Iraqi people are the decisive terrain in Iraq, and further suggests that relationships are the critical component of counterinsurgency operations” suggests GEN Petraeus in outlining his counterinsurgency guidance.<sup>13</sup> Petraeus provided guidance that Army leaders needed to gain support from the Iraqis, and to facilitate establishment of local governance; while understanding the local culture and history about the tribes, formal and informal leaders, government structures, religious elements, and local security forces. Together with our Iraqi counterparts, Army leaders should strive to establish productive ties with local leaders, tribal sheiks, governmental officials, religious leaders, and their agencies.<sup>14</sup>

Central to the new 2009 strategy in Afghanistan is a focus on the population. General Stanley McCrystal’s Commander’s Initial Assessment, dated 30 August 2009, replicated GEN Petraeus’ guidance, and identified the objective of the strategy as the will of the people.<sup>15</sup> In this new operational culture of population-centric counterinsurgency, GEN McCrystal stated in his report:

ISAF must alter its operational culture to focus on building personal relationships with its Afghan partners and protect the population...ISAF personnel must seek out, understand, and act to address the needs and grievances of the people in their local environment. Strong personal relationships forged between security forces and local populations will be a key to success.<sup>16</sup>

GEN McCrystal quoted further in an October 2009 Newsweek Magazine as saying that “I immediately decreed that ISAF troops were going to learn how to get along with the local population...I wanted the troops to get out into the field, away from the company forward operating bases and into the streets”.<sup>17</sup>

After fighting multiple wars for more than 30 years, Afghanistan has developed its own particular rules, style, and logic of warfare. One rule that Afghan commanders live by is to side with the winner. So as not to be seen as a loser and relinquish power, commanders may change sides in the middle of the conflict. Therefore, changing sides is part of an Afghan way of war. Recently in 2001, large infusions of American dollars were given to the mujahedeen and tribal figures, and promises made to Taliban commanders that they would receive prominent positions in the new military, thereby allowing a changing of sides. As war progressed, however, half-hearted and ill-funded efforts had the reverse effect. Taliban leaders and fighters once supportive to the shift in power to the United States and a new Afghan government became disenchanted and aligned with the insurgency. The key proof of realignments will be when the Taliban further aligned with Al Qaeda.<sup>18</sup> Key to the realignment of Taliban forces is the development of relationships and on-going dialogues to persuade them to change sides. Fotini and Semple (2009) alluded to being more attuned and empathetic with the needs of the Taliban and communicate those through a series of reconciliation meetings. This is quite a divergent security tactic than previously employed by coalition forces in the previous years.<sup>19</sup>

The need to show empathy, respect, openness, cooperativeness, cultural sensitivity, think critically, and utilize social intelligence (all key components to adaptability) illustrated in Major Paul Stanton's paper in Military Review in 2006. A classical understanding of how a leader becomes adaptable within new surroundings was the efforts of his leadership with B/1-502 Infantry in Mosul, Iraq. MAJ Stanton reported:

Many were skeptical of our true intentions in the area to begin with. Since they had been raised to hate Americans, it took only one disgruntled individual to persuade an entire coffee shop of listeners that Americans were in Iraq as an occupation force to steal

oil and corrupt Muslim beliefs...We had to understand this context and approach the local people accordingly; we needed to understand the history and background of the area to relate to the people...If we wanted to earn their trust and eventually persuade them to offer us information, then we had to legitimize our presence by focusing our activities on real solutions to their immediate requirements...Most citizens were guarded but open-minded about U.S. intentions; however, they all wanted to see tangible evidence of our claim to help...It also had to be initiated immediately upon transition to prevent the insurgent message from taking root. ..Soldiers also had to understand Iraqi customs and history and be able to speak a few words of Arabic to earn the people's respect...In Mosul, developing habitual relationships was critical to earning trust. In fact, relationship-building was the decisive point of the stability operation... The Iraqis learned that the soldier had a wife and two kids at home and other details that were seemingly insignificant in terms of mission success, but critical in humanizing the soldier. Such exchanges helped us take a monumental step toward winning the hearts and minds of the local population-the locals no longer viewed us as occupiers, but rather as individuals.<sup>20</sup>

It is the actions of the Army platoon and company-level leaders interacting daily with the local populace and possibly the enemy that will develop the relationships, and communicate the narrative, through their words, gestures, behaviors, and actions. Since 2001 conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Philippines, and Pakistan have demonstrated the need to listen to and work directly with the population. As with police officers in the streets of America “walking their beat”, so it is with the Soldiers in the streets of Marjah, Kandahar, Fallujah, and the like that will play the strategic role of convincing the local citizens that the United States, and its coalition partners, are there to help.



### **An Awkward Reality: Combating Negative Perceptions of the American**

Regretfully, negative perceptions of Americans abound globally and may affect the Army's ability to obtain the support of host nationals in certain countries. Relationships between Americans and Muslims have deteriorated since the attacks of September 11, 2001. This is true among Muslim nations supportive or not of the United States' foreign agenda. Gallup (2006) identified in a 2005 poll that Muslims felt humiliated by the Western world and believed that it was attempting to impose its faith and government policies upon Muslim countries.<sup>21</sup> The poll further suggested that Muslim perceptions are that westerners do not respect Islam and should stop interfering in the internal affairs of Muslim states.

Anti-Americanism is strongest in the Muslim world, although it is a worldwide view and is not just a rift with European allies or hatred of America in the Middle East. Less than one-third of those surveyed in Muslim countries had a favorable view of the United States in a 2006 Pew study. After the invasion of Iraq many Muslim countries saw the United States as a threat to Islam. Note that it was after the invasion of Iraq and not Afghanistan that this phenomenon occurred. A significant development noted in this study pointed out that anti-Americanism is no longer limited to a negative perception of the U.S. government, but a negative perception of the American people as well. Although seen as hard working and inventive, Americans were perceived as being dishonest, greedy, rude, immoral, and violent.<sup>22</sup> Many people resent the United States. As a nation, America is seen to have self-serving motives to control Mideast oil, dominate the world, target unfriendly governments, and protect Israel. The report further suggests that foreign perceptions suggest the true purpose of the War on Terrorism was not to reduce international terrorism, but to further the above national agenda.<sup>23</sup>

Afghans are more skeptical of the United States leadership and troops since President Obama announced a surge of 30,000 coalition Soldiers into Afghanistan. In a recent Gallop survey, Afghans' opinions of the United States, as a nation, had dropped to their lowest levels since the start of the war in 2001. The bottom line of the report stated

Gallup's surveys ahead of the surge suggest Afghans' confidence, as well as their approval of U.S. leadership, were faltering in October 2009. Therefore, not only will U.S. troops be battling insurgents in coming months, they likely will also be combating Afghans' increasing skepticism that they can actually help the situation.<sup>24</sup>

People base their actions on perceptions, assumptions, customs, and values.<sup>25</sup> This causes unique problems for both American Soldiers and host nationals. The Ugly American was a fictional novel, based on fact, written by William Lederer and Eugene Burdick in 1958. The book outlined numerous actions of American diplomacy in Southeast Asia during the 1950s and 1960s. The authors' points accentuated through contrast of U.S. successes and failures as well as U.S. and communist competition in that region. The authors' intent was not to provide interesting reading, but rather to enlighten people on an effective means of communication and influence when dealing with foreign host nation leaders. Through fictional scenarios based on fact, the authors documented viable solutions to problems diplomats faced on a daily basis.

The learning point of this book is that the successful story's characters were mentally agile and behaviorally adaptive, had the sense of the cultural awareness, an empathic understanding of all people, and a clear picture of the host nation's social structure. In contrast, Americans who did not demonstrate these skills adversely influenced the situation. Only through an understanding of different cultures with a sense of empathy will one be able to influence them. The error of many of the characters in this book was that they attempted to dominate the

culture rather than influence it. The book is as applicable today as it ever has been. Army leaders will need to suspend their own ethnocentrism and cognitive biases in order to influence host nationals. Overcoming current anti-American perceptions requires Army leaders to acknowledge these possible views and adapt in such a way as to minimize their effects.

### **A Framework to Understand Adaptability**

The concept of adaptability has been studied in the United States since the late 1980s within disciplines of psychology, sociology, health, sports, education, and business management, and has been associated with elusive concepts such as agility, flexibility, and versatility. Foundational research in the 1970s and 1980s studied stress management to analyze human coping mechanisms that later led into adaptability concepts in human performance. Individual adaptability research broadened into leader and team concepts. The last decade has focused on improving human performance in convoluted and changing environments to meet the complex needs of the twenty-first century.

Adaptive performance is captured in eight different situations, or dimensions, in which a person must change to be effective. These situations are (1) handling emergency or crisis situations; (2) handling work stress; (3) solving problems creatively; (4) dealing with uncertain and unpredictable situations; (5) learning new work tasks, procedures, and technologies; (6) demonstrating interpersonal adaptability; (7) demonstrating cultural adaptability and (8) demonstrating physical oriented adaptability.<sup>26</sup> The significance of these dimensions is that they constitute the same dimensions an Army leader requires in a non-kinetic environment and central to the skills an Army leader needs in winning a counter-insurgency conflict. This eight-dimension model is utilized as a foundation of numerous studies within Army and Department of Defense research since 2005.

Ployhart and Bliese (2006) suggested that “individual adaptability represents an individual’s ability, skill, disposition, willingness, and/or motivation, to change or fit different task, social, and environmental features”.<sup>27</sup> They further suggest that adaptability can be either proactive or reactive in nature and is influenced by a person’s cognitive ability, personality, values and interests, physical ability among other knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics.<sup>28</sup>

Pulakos, Dorsey, and White (2006) built on the work conducted by Pulakos, Arad, Donovan and Plamondon (2000), and identified eleven individual skills, or attributes, needed to bring about positive adaptive change within situations. The significance of this research is that it defines the adaptive attributes associated with adaptability and therefore provides a foundation to the needed skills for Army leaders within the non-kinetic fight. These attributes allow an individual to be agile enough to adapt to a variety of unfamiliar and complex situations. These cognitive and behavioral skills are multiple and interconnected. An adaptable person should be able to understand and use language, apply knowledge and past experiences to solve ill-defined problems, and come up with unusual or clever ideas to develop creative ways to solve a problem. An adaptable person needs to be able to remain levelheaded, even-tempered, and calm when confronted by adversity, or stressful and difficult situations; and receptive to new environments and events in a curious and broadminded way. S/he should be able to perceive change as a challenge or opportunity for further development, be interested in or desire to achieve results and master tasks beyond others’ expectations, set difficult and challenging goals, and work hard to accomplish them while showing a drive to succeed. An Army leader should be able to work effectively with others towards a common purpose while giving and taking in an effort to achieve group goals and develop constructive relationships. S/he should be able to have a sense

of ease within social situations and enjoy meeting people, understand situational appropriate social behavior, while understanding the feelings, motivations, and behaviors of others.<sup>29</sup> This study makes the strongest connection to the skills required by Army leaders during this era of persistent conflict where they must navigate through an environment filled with an unfamiliar culture, high operational tempo, high degree of uncertainty, and a tenacious enemy that is constantly shifting tactics and approaches.

Banks, et al (2001) defined adaptability as “A functional change (cognitive, behavioral, and/or affective) in response to altered environmental circumstances”.<sup>30</sup> This definition is useful because of its holistic view of all human capabilities. After a review of the empirical research literature on adaptability, this writer would suggest that there are three components to the definition. The first component of the definition is a new and unprecedented event. Second, the person is able to forecast and/or implement action, and third, the action must be implemented to effect the needed change.

Mark Moyer’s book *A Question of Command* (2009) parallels the adaptive performance model, and is aligned with the Marine Corps belief that all operations are leader-centric.<sup>31</sup> The Marine Corps supports the adaptive performance model but weaves it into its intuitive leader program.<sup>32</sup> Moyer’s concept is overall very sound. In his book, Moyer argues that counterinsurgency is “leader-centric” not “human-centric” warfare in which superior leadership attributes prevail and win. Moyer identifies leader attributes as initiative, flexibility, creativity, judgment, empathy, charisma, sociability, dedication, integrity, and organization.<sup>33</sup> He suggests sound counterinsurgency doctrine has consistently failed because of a lack of good leaders. Moyer’s attributes strike a remarkable resemblance to Pulakos et al concept of adaptable performance. The attributes of flexibility and sociability are identical in both Moyer’s and

Pulakos et al constructs. Moyer's attributes of initiative and dedication attributes align with Pulakos' adaptability characteristics of achievement motivation; creatively with originality; judgment with practical intelligence; empathy and charisma with social intelligence; and organization with cognitive ability. Yet the adaptive performance model takes a step further and sees value in leaders being culturally competent. Critical to the concept of adaptive performance are the attributes of openness and cooperativeness seen in both Pulakos et al and the Army's models on adaptability yet lacking in Moyer's model.

The Army adaptive leadership model analyzes characteristics across the three different types of intelligence: cognitive, social or interpersonal, and culture. In contrast, Moyer asserts leaders who are more advanced in cognitive and social intelligence attributes are more effective. Moyer's lack of cultural competence negates the sociocultural factors so important to developing cognitive solutions in complex situations abroad. This is a major flaw to Moyer's argument. In addition, the Army's adaptive performance model is inclusive of personality traits, domain-specific knowledge, previous experience, physical ability and other characteristics such as values and interests.<sup>34</sup>

Moyer's choices of references are limited to historical perspectives. He forgoes the large amount of research on adaptive leadership in behavioral and social sciences that takes up the depth of knowledge in the field. This limits his perspectives significantly and hence his argument.

For the purpose of this paper, Army Adaptive Leadership is defined as: *The ability for an Army leader to effectively anticipate and/or implement action to an unprecedented situation by exerting internal and/or external influence in such a way as to create the needed change or improve one's effectiveness across any sociocultural situation.*

## **The Adaptability Construct within Department of Defense**

The Department of Defense, and Headquarters, Department of the Army have contributed significant research in the development of leadership competencies in adaptability with military leaders. Research initiated because of the changing face of war and difficulties in being successful in complex operating environments while dealing with uncertain requirements experienced by Army and Marine leaders. There have been seventeen significant research studies and numerous reports sponsored by either DOD or HQDA between 2000 and 2009 (Appendix A). The Army has been the primary service to provide research into different aspects of adaptability. Both DOD and HQDA have sponsored independent studies. The two main contractors to specialize in adaptability and hence produce the research studies are the Institute for Defense Analyses and Personnel Defense Research Institutes. Caliber Corporation and Northrop Grumman have also contributed studies to the effort. The main DOD organization to produce research in adaptability has been the Army Research Institute in Behavioral and Social Sciences, HQDA. A study conducted by PDRI summarized the progress with adaptability across DOD:

Although adaptability has long been considered a core competency for military leadership (e.g., Department of the Army, 2001, Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1-0), there is still debate about what adaptability is, how to measure it, and how and whether it can be developed through training or other interventions.<sup>35</sup>

## **Foundation of Army Adaptability**

Much is right with Army adaptive leadership. First, the Army has devoted tremendous research and study into an adaptability performance model; second, the Army has established some adaptive performance pilot studies and non-kinetic skills programs (see Appendix A).<sup>36</sup> In

June 2005, the HQDA, Deputy Chief of Staff G-1, Army Research Institute on Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) embarked on a long-range study to define, develop, measure, and assess a means to teach adaptability.<sup>37</sup> The purpose was to provide a prototype set of methods to develop adaptable leaders and train the battle command skills required to lead soldiers effectively in complex and unfamiliar environments. An adaptive performance model was designed to prevent junior leaders from the harsh realities of learning to adapt in combat, as illustrated by Wong (2004) in his publication *Developing Adaptive Leaders: The Crucible Experience of Operation Iraqi Freedom*.<sup>38</sup> The research covers fiscal years 2005 to 2013 and studies four adaptability performance dimensions. The **Cognitive Adaptability** dimension includes critical thinking, creative problem solving, and self-assessment, referred to by the Army as “*Adaptive Thinking*”. **Multi-level Influence Strategies** describes the affective and cognitive skills important in social intelligence. Research focus includes strategies to train leaders how to influence and shape climates within and outside the chain of command.<sup>39</sup> **Cross-cultural Competence** examines the ability to understand and accept diversity and be creative in navigating the complexities of new cultures. This culture-general competency is not cultural training or region specific education. Research and study in this area is new. Lastly, **Leading Adaptive/Multinational Teams** enhances team effectiveness, teaches leading of complex organizations, and combines leadership and teamwork in net-centric environments.

Second, the Army is succeeding with adaptive performance in initiating pilot programs in critical thinking and establishing programs to build non-kinetic skills and test efficacy. Three proponent courses were recognized as adaptive in concept by the Department of Defense.<sup>40</sup> The first is the Adaptive Thinking Training concept accepted by TRADOC. Second, The Special Forces Qualification Course at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Course and School (Fort



Bragg) maintains the Officer Adaptive Thinking and Leadership course. Last, The Adaptive Leader Methodology, developed by Don Vandergriff, (TRADOC) also focuses on critical thinking methods. The Combat Advisor Mobile Training Teams conducted by 162<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Training Brigade at FT Polk is unique as the only course offered to deploying Soldiers. The course is offered to Soldiers deploying in support of multinational training teams. This fifteen-day program includes three of the four adaptability components of multilevel influence strategies, adaptive thinking, and leading multinational teams.<sup>41</sup>

Many organizations across the Army work adaptability methodologies, but problems hamper the accession into the training/education cycle. In the meantime, an adaptable enemy presses the U.S. Army's capabilities in non-kinetic warfare. The Army must train its leaders, without delay, to ensure they can positively carry out the strategic objective of gaining the support and will of the people.

### **Shortcomings of Army adaptive leadership**

Army leaders are not being taught proficiency at developing the skills to be adaptive and agile in the non-kinetic fight. A 2008 Department of Defense study stated "Much of what the Army offered as 'adaptability' training is application of lessons learned from current operations. While extremely useful, particularly in terms of developing domain-specific experience, this training is not in itself sufficient to develop proficiency in adaptive performance."<sup>42</sup> Numerous programs established by the Army develop adaptability skills, but no one program incorporates all components of Army adaptability. For an Army leader to be fully proficient at adapting to any sociocultural setting and successfully influencing a solution all skills need to be present.

## **Compartmentalization**

The current Army concept of compartmentalizing adaptive performance dimensions fragments current research and programming. This fragmentation encourages the view that different capabilities are independent and places them in competition with each other. As new thoughts on leadership emerge, the Army faces temptation to abandon old precepts and embrace the new.<sup>43</sup> Dr. Allison Abbe, research psychologist, HQDA-ARI concurs, “I suspect that’s partly because it’s easier to add to than to change an existing program of instruction. I also think that senior leaders have occasionally encouraged fragmentation by insisting that certain capabilities show up as distinct blocks of instruction on the training schedule. A live exercise might address lots of aspects of adaptability, but because it doesn’t appear as a ‘cultural’ exercise or a ‘team adaptability’ exercise, it may look like the cadre isn’t doing much to build those skills.”<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, compartmentalizing adaptability into separate dimensions increases the risk that some Army leaders will not be taught some of the dimensions of agility of thought and adaptability of action. Hence, the leader’s overall ability to adapt to new and complex environments will be limited in scope. The Army focuses most of its effort on those cognitive skills closest linked to the tactical fight (adaptive thinking and rapid decision-making), despite the human aspects of COIN.<sup>45</sup> Other dimensions of adaptive performance (multilevel influence strategies, and leading multinational teams) receive less emphasis with the least attention given to culture-general competence.

The goal of adaptive thinking is to teach leaders “how to think and not what to think”.<sup>46</sup> The problem is adaptive thinking is based on a kinetic environment. Combat themes used to make decisions are tactical factors like “consider effects of terrain,” and “model a thinking enemy.”<sup>47</sup> There are spin-offs to the theme-based adaptive thinking training with crisis action

planning for garrison commanders and crisis action planning for catastrophic events with the National Guard.<sup>48</sup> The bad news is that very few sociocultural vignettes are associated with the program. The good news is the program can easily be changed to include population-centric vignettes focusing on non-kinetic skills.

The Army provides resources for developing region-specific and cultural training and has established the Culture Center at FT Huachuca, AZ. Despite the training efforts current approaches to culture are not targeting adaptability. While region or culture-specific knowledge skills do enhance adaptive thinking, these skills are domain-specific and not associated with an adaptability performance model. Cultural training addresses the specific knowledge of operating in a particular country (which may in fact include many subcultures). Culture-general competency, in contrast, enables leaders to adapt to varying cultural contexts by educating leaders in different dynamics of culture and teaches leaders how to navigate through the sociocultural aspects to influence change. Culture-general competency has not been the focus, for the general-purpose force.<sup>49</sup>

### **Adaptive Performance Requirements**

Little adaptability education or training has made its way into pre-deployment venues for either the active or reserve components. This is partly due to the fact that the FORSCOM Southwest Training Guidance, 27 October 2009 and the First Army Command Training Guidance, 10 January 2009 have few non-kinetic warfight requirements. Per the FORSCOM guidance:

2. Category 1 contingency base or forward operating base unit's required (individual) training consists of 61 major tasks; 9 required by CFLCC; 8 required by HQDA; 1 required by DOD and 32 Army Warrior Skill level 1 tasks, and 11 common

first aid tasks...3. Category 1 contingency base units required training (leader). All officers/NCOs in leadership positions at all levels, deploying as part of a unit, must be trained in required leader specific tasks listed...all leaders are required to be trained in political, cultural, economic, and religious awareness...negotiations.<sup>50</sup> All training is tactical, kinetic warfight skills except for cultural awareness education and negotiations.

First Army provides direction for the execution of post-mobilization training, validation, and deployment of reserve component deployment expeditionary forces. Guidance is provided through the First Army Command Training Guidance. The First Army guidance does not require or suggest any non-kinetic skills to enhance Army leader adaptability in the areas of metacognition skills of critical thinking/self-regulation (Leader Adaptability), influence strategies and social intelligence (Multilevel Influence Strategies), cross-cultural competency (Cross-Culture Competence), and leading adaptive teams (Leading Multinational Teams). All skills are related to the tactical environment. There is the requirement that all Observer Controller/Trainers should be subject matter experts in the application of counterinsurgency and reinforce doctrinal principles.<sup>51</sup>

The consistent exception to pre-deployment training on Army leader adaptability is work with multilevel influence strategies, cross-cultural competency, and leading multinational teams. Focus is on working with host nation military in the role of military advisors. The Combat Advisor Mobile Training Teams (CMATT) conducted by 162<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Training Brigade at FT Polk is a predominant program. This fifteen-day program includes three of the four adaptability components of multi-influence strategies, cross-cultural competence, and leading multinational teams. Training consists of advisor traits, negotiation techniques, influencing techniques, rapport building, mentoring techniques, engagement techniques, and integrating and influencing among

other skill sets. The program is broken down into three phases, or blocks, consisting of individual, collective, and certification. A ten-day training phase begins the individual phase followed by a three-day collective, and a two-day certification phase. Most knowledge is the pre-deployment training conducted for the Modular Brigade Combat Team Augmented for Security Force Assistance (BCT-SFA) in which the 162 ITB conducted combat advisor training.<sup>52</sup>

### **Preparing Army Leaders NOW for Non-Kinetic Asymmetric Warfare**

#### **Way Ahead**

Army leaders must adapt personally while fostering an environment that supports adaptability in others to influence change irrelevant of cultural background and social setting. For leaders to be fully adaptive across situations they need to be trained in all of adaptive performance dimensions and constructs. An adaptive performance model must have all of the dimensions and constructs linked to each other and teaching is time-sensitive. Without the two requirements of linked dimensions and time sensitivity the Army leader will not completely adapt and hence be ineffective in the non-kinetic warfight. Compartmentalizing adaptive skills compromises a leader's effectiveness. To remove compartmentalization the Army must have a single point of contact for Adaptability.

A single adaptability knowledge point will integrate all of the dimensions and constructs required of an adaptable and agile leader. This capability can be established by HQDA to form an *Army Non-kinetic Warfare Integration Team* as a bridging strategy.

This bridging strategy would ensure that Army leaders deploying into the warfight have the adaptive non-kinetic skills to win the asymmetric war. Meanwhile, the Department of Defense and the Army can continue to develop and adaptive performance model for future

integration into a professional development cycle. FORSCOM and First Army would oversee the bridging strategy implementation. TRADOC, ARI and proponent commands would continue to research a final Army adaptive performance model. A pre-deployment *Adaptive Non-kinetic Warfare Course* will include both adaptability metaskill training for specific attributes and domain-specific non-kinetic warfare skills training. This course will pull together research and training currently used across the force on cognitive adaptability, multi-level influence strategies, cross cultural competency, and team adaptability. Adaptability training for specific attributes coursework can include critical thinking and creative problem solving, self-regulation in stressful environments, influencing members and enhancing team adaptability dynamics, enhancing social judgment, social awareness and leader influence, tacit knowledge and cultural reasoning, and cross-cultural competence among others. Domain-specific non-kinetic warfare skills coursework can include negotiation skills for non-combatants, decoding nonverbal cues in cross-cultural interactions, working with an interpreter, information operations working with the narrative, and human data-collection, among others.

A leader's ability to be agile and adaptive falls along a continuum from highly adaptive across sociocultural settings to unable to adapt effectively. It is unrealistic to suggest a leader can gain skills and experience to significantly raise their ability to adapt effectively after taking a short course in adaptability. It is reasonable to suggest that a leader can increase their ability to self-regulate, attunement to their surroundings, and proficiency in skills as negotiation, non-lethal conflict resolution, influencing others, and an understanding of the mindset of the people that they are about to encounter. A short course in adaptive leadership is not the end all solution, yet it is a bridging solution to ensure that Army leaders are more proficient and they would be without any training. I would suggest that the right course would bring about a mind-shift in

many officers and NCOs that do not believe in the concept of human-centered counterinsurgency, stability, and peace-keeping operations. The ability to increase proficiency will be based on the quality and type of teaching modalities. It must be the right type of learning modalities to offer the greatest chance for effectiveness.

A pre-deployment *Adaptive Non-kinetic Warfare Course* should be experiential-based program to ensure the full extent of learning. It should include aspects of live instruction with a review of case studies and historical vignettes, peer testimonies of successes for resistant student buy-in, virtual first person training with immediate feedback loops, self-regulation techniques, as well 360-degree feedback during training among other aspects of learning. Examples associated with these learning methodologies and adaptability training includes Adaptive Leader Methodology, developed by Don Vandergriff, and Adaptive Thinking Training used at Fort Knox Maneuver Captain's Career Course. Computer-based learning tools such as "Captains in Command" and ATEC's First Person Cultural Trainer provide flexibility with video-based learning. Virtual reality tools such as the ATEC's provide a realistic virtual environment in a 3<sup>D</sup> interactive game that teaches Soldiers the values and norms of Iraq and Afghan cultures and can help enhance cross-cultural competency.<sup>53</sup> These tools can be effective as part of a mobile training environment or independently with a gaming console or an application on an iPhone. Take-aways such as the Scenario Training for Agile Teams booklet provide continued reinforcement as a hip-pocket training tool.<sup>54</sup> The booklet supports an Afghan/Iraq scenario-based, leader led process to enhance team adaptability, a shared understanding of the commander's intent, and trust within a team.<sup>55</sup> Other take-aways such as the Afghanistan Smart Book from the TRADOC Cultural Center provides a history, cultural perspective and understanding of Afghanistan and can be taken along a deployment.<sup>56</sup>

A collaborative approach can be effective in merging the pre-deployment components of COIN and cultural awareness training with an *Agile and Adaptable Leader Non-kinetic Warfare Course*. It is the writer's opinion that both COIN and cultural awareness training should be implemented prior to adaptive leadership training to provide a foundation of knowledge and understanding of adaptability needs within an asymmetric environment. Instruction methodology is critical to ensure Army leaders assimilate the knowledge and understanding of being agile and adaptable.

### **Conclusion**

Building and enhancing adaptive performance in Army leaders is no simple task and requires years of research and study prior to implementing a permanent training policy. President Obama suggested that an Afghanistan drawdown could start as early as July 2011 and all combat brigades will depart from Iraq by the end of next 2010, and all of U.S. troops by the end of 2011.<sup>57</sup> There are suggestions that Army adaptability research will continue through fiscal year 2013.<sup>58</sup> Many Americans hope that major combat operations within Iraq and Afghanistan will have ended by 2013. The United States will be the victor or loser depending on how well Army leaders, in part, adapt to the non-kinetic battle.

The Army must execute how it trains leaders today so they may have the skills necessary to adapt to foreign environments and cultures during this time of persistent conflict.<sup>59</sup> The Army puts countless hours of training and education into ensuring that Army leaders are prepared to overwhelm the enemy in the kinetic phases of an operation. Yet, comparatively, little investment to ensure our leaders have the non-kinetic skills to make logical decisions, influence others, and foster the trust and credibility needed to win the hearts and minds. It is the opinion of this writer that the Army needs to re-prioritize these requirements.



A bridging strategy can be implemented so Army leaders deploy into the war fight with the non-kinetic skills to win the asymmetric war. This will provide time while the Department of Defense and the Army validates an adaptability construct for future integration into a professional development cycle. There is a means to supply the war fight with adaptable leaders skilled with the proper cognitive and non-cognitive skills to be successful in the non-kinetic fight. The implementation of an adaptability pre-deployment course is the next step for the Army. If strong leaders lack adaptive, non-kinetic skills then a sound counterinsurgency strategy will fail! There is no time to waste, and we must capture the human high ground.



Appendix A. Official Department of Defense Adaptability Studies & Reports				
Date	Researchers	Institution	Proponent	Title
2000	Pulakos, E.D.; & Dorsey, D.W.	Personnel Defense Research Institutes	HQDA-ARI	The Development and Validation of Measures to Predict Adaptive Job Performance (Institute Report #3347)
2001	HQDA		HQDA	The Army Training and Leader Development Panel Officer Study Report to the Army
2002	Morrison, J.E.; & Fletcher, J.D.	Institute for Defense Analyses	DOD	Cognitive Readiness (IDA Paper P-3735)
2002	White, S.S.; & Dorsey, D.W.		HQDA-ARI	Review of Adaptive Literature and Products (Briefing)
2004	Fletcher, J.D.	Institute for Defense Analyses	DOD	Cognitive Readiness: Preparing for the Unexpected (IDA Document D-3061)
2004	Horey, J.; Fallesen, J.J.; Morath, R.; Cronin, B.; Cassella, R.; Franks, Jr., W.; & Smith, J.	Caliber	HQDA-ARI	Competency Based Future Leadership Requirements (Institute Report #1148)
2005	White, S.S.; Mueller-Hanson, R.A.; Dorsey, D.W.; Pulakos, E.D.; Wisecarver, M.M.; Deagle, E.A.; & Mendini, K.G.		HQDA-ARI	Developing Adaptive Proficiency in Special Forces Officers (Institute Report # 1831)
2005	Tillson, J.C.F.; Freeman, W.D.; Burns, W.R.; Michel, J.; LeCuyer, J.A.; Scales, R.H.; & Worley, D.R.	Institute for Defense Analyses	DOD	Learning to Adapt to Asymmetric Threats (IDA Document D-3114)
2005	Goodwin, G.F.		HQDA-ARI	Review of Adaptive Research and Programs (Briefing)
2005	Mueller-Hanson, R.A.; White, S.S.; Dorsey, D.W.; & Pulakos, E.D.	Personnel Defense Research Institutes	HQDA-ARI	Training Adaptable Leaders: Lessons from Research and Practice (Research Report 1844)
2007	McGregor, M.U.; Schunn, C.D.; & Saner, L.D.	University of Pittsburg	HQDA-ARI	Expertise as Effective Strategy Use: Testing the Adaptive Strategies Model in the III-Structured Domain of Leadership (Institute Report #1201)
2007	Zaccaro, S.J.; Banks, D.; Kiechel-Koles, C.; Kemp, C.; & Bader, P.	George Mason University	HQDA-ARI	Leader and Team Adaption: The Influence and Development of Key Attributes and Processes (Institute Report #1256)
2007	Mueller-Hanson, R.A.; Swartout, E.C.; Morewitz, C.L.; Keil, C.T.; McGonigle, T.P.; Martin, C.; Parish, C.; & Morath, R.A.		HQDA-ARI	Social Awareness and Leader Influence: A Proposed Model and Training Intervention (Institute Report #1874)
2007	Nobel, O.B.; Wortinger, B.; & Hannah, S.	USMA	HQDA-ARI	Winning the War and the Relationships: Preparing Military Officers for Negotiations With Non-Combatants (Institute Report #1877)
2008	Burns, W.R.; Freeman, W.D.	Institute for Defense Analyses	DOD	Developing an Adaptability Training Strategy and Policy for The DoD (IDA Paper P-4358)
2008	Klein, K.J.; & Kozlowski, S.W.J.	University of Pennsylvania & Michigan State University	HQDA-ARI	Leadership: Enhancing Team Adaptability in Dynamic Settings (Institute Report #1228)
2009	Zaccaro, S.J.; Banks, D.; Kiechel-Koles, C.; & Bader, P.	George Mason University	HQDA-ARI	Principles and Strategies for Developing Skills that Promote Adaptive Performance
2009	Mueller-Hanson, R.A.; Swartout, E.; Hilton, R.; & Nelson, J.	Personnel Defense Research Institutes	DOD	Proof of Concept Research for Developing Adaptive Performance: Task 1 Technical Report
2009	Goodwin, G.F.		HQDA-ARI	Review of Adaptive Research and Programs (Interview and Briefing Slides)
2009	Leibrecht, B.C.; McGilvray, D.; Tystad, D.L.; & Garven, S.	Northrop Grumman	HQDA-ARI	Operational Assessment of Tools for Accelerating Leader Development (ALD): Volume II, Appendices (Research Note 2009-09)
2009	Mueller-Hanson, R.A.; Wisecarver, M.M.; Dorsey, D.W.; Ferro, G.A.; & Mendini, K.	Personnel Defense Research Institutes	HQDA-ARI	Developing Adaptive Training in the Classroom (Research Product 2009-10)
2009	Leibrecht, B.C.; McGilvray, D.; Tystad, D.L.; & Garven, S.	Northrop Grumman	HQDA-ARI	Operational Assessment of Tools for Accelerating Leader Development (ALD): Volume I, Capstone Report (Technical Report 1252)
2009	Evans, Kenneth, L.; Knerr, Bruce W.; Gesselman, Amanda N.	ARI & Columbia State University	HQDA-ARI	Training Small Unit Leaders and Teams (Special Report 68)
2009	Zbylut, Michelle R.; Metcalf, Kimberly A.; McGowan, Brandon; Beemer, Michael; Brunner, Jason M.; Vowels, Christopher L.	ARI, Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance, Kansas State University	HQDA-ARI	The Human Dimension of Advising: Description Statistics for the Cross-Cultural Activities of Transition Team Members (ARI Research Note 2009-07)
2009	Rosenthal, Douglas B.; Wadsworth, Lee A.; Russell Teresa L.; Mathew, Julisara; Elfenbein, Hillary A.; Sanchez-Burks, Jeffrey; Ruark, Gregory A.	Job Performance, Human Resources Research Organization, University of California, ARI	HQDA-ARI	Training Soldiers to Decode Nonverbal Cues in Cross-Cultural Interactions (ARI Research Note 2009-12)
2009	O'Connor, Andi; Roan, Linda; Cushner, Kenneth; Metcalf, Kimberly A.	eCrossCulture Corp., Kent State University, ARI	HQDA-ARI	Cross-Cultural Strategies for Improving the Teaching, Training, and Mentoring Skills of Military Transition Team Advisors



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